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Training Loving Hands: Women's Vocational

Education in 1920s Mexico City

Patience A. Schell
Oxford University

During the 1920s, the revolutionary governments responded to demands for educational expansion. The federal *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) founded new primary schools, embarked upon a nation wide campaign against illiteracy and opened public libraries in rural areas, union meeting halls and prisons. For José Vasconcelos, Minister of Public Education 1921-1924, technical education was the means to create the generations of skilled workers Mexico needed.[1] From Mexico City's technical schools emerged the construction workers who would rebuild Mexico[2] and the electricians who would light the cities.

While men's vocational schools trained skilled workers to rebuild and modernize Mexico, women's vocational schools trained women, first, as mothers and homemakers. Women's vocational education did not treat its students as equal partners in the revolutionary process, rather, they were encouraged to find their fulfillment in the domestic sphere. Although both teacher-training and commercial schools enrolled women, the number of women's vocational schools indicate the predominance of this training. In 1924, there were eleven technical, commercial and vocational schools for men and women in the Mexico City area. Five of these were women's vocational schools.[3] By 1928, in the Federal District, seven out of fourteen technical schools specialized in women's vocational education.[4] Furthermore, enrollment in these schools increased consistently throughout much of the 1920s, indicating that women found vocational training useful.

This paper begins by examining the justifications for women's vocational education and discussing the courses in each institution. Next, we will enter classrooms to examine how students, teachers and administrators altered or enhanced SEP programmes to benefit their own agendas. For

1. Fell, C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila*. México UNAM. pp. 195-96.
2. Meneses Morales, E. (1983) *Tendencias educativas oficiales en México 1911-1934*. México Editorial Porrúa. p. 381.
3. Secretaría de Educación Pública. (1928) *El esfuerzo educativo en México Tomo I*. México Secretaría de Educación Pública. pp. 504-05.
4. *Ibid*., pp. 512-13.

this end, I will present two case studies: one concerning the dissemination of birth control information and the other concerning cooking and dress making classes. Penultimately this paper will examine night schools aimed specifically at working women. Finally, we will turn to the students themselves. Who were they, what were their motivations for furthering their education and what became of them?

Reasons for Women's Vocational Education

In women's technical education, family members sought refuge from the outside world and learned morality in the home; the base of the home was the mother. 'Tan pronto como se logre imprimir una verdadera educación a la joven mujer se habrán echado las raíces en la regeneración social.'[5] However according to educators, women of the 1920s lacked the skills to create and manage a modern home, a home in which stain-removal followed principals of chemistry and meals were tailored to the nutritional needs of each family member. Vocational training filled the domestic lacuna which educators observed, showing women how to create an idealized domestic space and how to moralize their families. Women's education needed to be both practical and theoretical in order to prepare them for the arduous mission of directing a home.[6] Thus, the primary intention of women's vocational education was creating mothers and household managers.

Additionally, the skills which women learned in vocational schools could provide an income supplement[7] and give them an 'honourable' means to earn their daily bread. The SEP's concern with an 'honourable' living was a reaction to the perceived increase in the number of prostitutes in postrevolutionary Mexico City. The years of conflict had unleashed passions which the revolutionaries attempted to restrain in a cage of respectability. As the 'weaker sex,' women were always in great peril, under constant temptation and 'easily misled' by too-abundant scoundrels. To read SEP documents, one might believe that women teetered on the precipice of prostitution and dishonor with vocational training the only handhold to stop their plummet into the depths of shame. But, how realistic was the SEP's fear for women's morals? According to Bliss, 'anecdotal evidence suggests that sexual commerce at least became more visible as women solicited customers on the street instead of inside brothels'.[8] Regardless of actual numbers of prostitutes the perception of lurking dishonour was sufficient to motivate educational initiatives which would provide women with small crafts-making skills.

The stress in women's vocational education on domestic crafts and womens duties in the home contrasts sharply with the public activism of Mexico's women. Galván notes the 'combatividad' of women in the early twentieth century who had supported strikes and later joined political movements.[9] During the Revolution, Galván finds ex-

5. Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública Departamento de Enseñanza Técnica, Industrial y Comercial (hereafter cited as AHSEP-DETIC) box 68/folder 29/documents 13-14 Inspector's report 'Informe Relativo a los cuatro Centros de Educación Cultura Femeniles,' 24 Dec 1923

6. AHSEP-DETIC 74/1518 Folleto de la Escuela Hogar 'Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz',' n.d. n.m. 1926

7. AHSEP-DETIC 68/34/16-9 Inspector night schools to Director DETIC, 26 July 1923

8. Bliss, K. (28 Sept 1994) 'At Alone in the City of Palaces.' (Paper presented at LASA), p. 20

9. Galván, L.E (1985) *La educación superior de la mujer* Mexico. Centro de investigaciones Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social Cuadernos de la Casa Chata 109 p. 28

strain of fees, grants were available for full time students of notorious poverty who had attained the minimum grade of 'muy bien' in their studies. In 1926, of the 50 scholarships available, 27 went to the *Escuela de Ingenieros Mecánicos y Electricistas* (a men's vocational school for skilled labour), 15 to commercial schools, one to the *Escuela Técnica de Constructores* (for construction site supervisors), four to women's vocational schools and two to technical schools in Europe.[19] While women's schools outnumbered mens, at least in terms of grants the men's technical schools fared better than women's.

Although a wide range of activities tempted students in women's vocational schools, the 'product models and consumer values'[20] inspiring courses generally reflected the tastes of the well-to-do. For example, one women's technical school offered classes in painting porcelain and making decorated boxes.[21] At the same school, sewing classes offered lingere making as well as 'corte y confección de trajes de novia, teatro y soire.'[22] Nonetheless, the models which the SEP paraded as ideal, whether elite or popular, were not unilaterally accepted and particular curricula, like cooking, became the subject of debate, as discussed below.

Each of the technical schools under the DETC required physical education classes for the student's overall well-being. According to the SEP, physical education played an essential role in the development of the complete person, providing health benefits and a wholesome form of amusement. Through physical education came the 'mejoramiento de la raza, tan degenerada hoy, por la falta casi absoluta de cultura física, y además se pondrá a los alumnos en mejores condiciones para luchar en la vida y para obtener la mayor eficiencia en su trabajo'.[23] If schools succeeded in instilling exercise habits, employers were ensured of a healthy work force and minimal absenteeism. Moreover, women's physical educational also assured the nation of healthy salubnous mothers to bear future citizens.

These future mothers also needed to learn household skills. Classes in women's household labour, generally defined as 'trabajos manuales,' taught women skills for home life. *Trabajos manuales* encompassed everything from mending to ironing, budget management to childcare, skills which the SEP believed women needed to run a household. Through these courses, women would learn to create a beautiful home with little cost. 'unierdo la economía a la belleza para hacer el hogar atractivo'.[24] These courses professionalized the housewife and transformed her into a manager of the domestic economy. They also gave women the responsibility to make up for their man's low wages through creative budget management.

If a women desired to find employment, she received little support from the SEP, as the SEP did not concern itself with finding positions for its women students. Neither SEP vocational schools nor worker night schools for women attempted to place graduating students. For example, the *Escuela de Enseñanza Doméstica* offered courses for teachers of home economics. However, the *directora* noted

19. AHSEP 5 (Feb. 1926), p. 174.

20. Vaughan, M.K. (1982) *The State, Education and Social Class*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, p. 205.

21. AHSEP-DETC 74/19/11 Folleto de la Escuela de Artes Industriales "Corregidora de Querétaro", para el año de 1927. n.d. Jan. 1927.

22. AHSEP-DETC 74/3/34 Programa de Corte y Confección de Vestidos para las escuelas técnicas, que fue aprobada en la Junta de Profesores verificada en la Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios para Señoritas, 9 de Dic. 1927.

23. SEP 1 (Sept. 1922), p. 117.

24. AHSEP-DETC 74/3/319 pamphlet "Escuela Hogar Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz". n.d. circa 1926.

that students who completed the degree could not find suitable employment; none of the primary schools offered home economics and secondary schools preferred to hire teachers with more general knowledge.[25] There is no evidence that the SEP attempted to create a market for these women by including home economics in the primary education curricula. The SEP's report on vocational education during 1924-1928 provides further evidence that the SEP did not concern itself with women's employment. The report includes a section on employment for male graduates with no parallel section for female graduates.[26]

Now let us turn to the various women's vocational schools in Mexico City. Vocational education was a crazy quilt of schools created in different periods and under various administrations. In 1922 in Mexico City the women's technical schools were the *Escuela de Arte Industrial 'La Corregidora de Querétaro'*, *Escuela Nacional de Enseñanza Doméstica* and *Escuela de Artes y Oficios para Señoritas*. That year, the SEP founded the *Escuela Hogar Gabriela Mistral*. The *Escuela Hogar Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* was founded in 1923. Most of these schools offered both day and night courses.

The *Escuela de Artes y Oficios para Señoritas* (EAOS), founded in 1871, was the first public women's vocational school. It was located on 5 de febrero #90, in Mexico City's historic downtown area. Classes and specialization at the EAOS included hand or machine embroidery and lace-making; cooking, dessert and confection making; manufacture of children's clothing; hat making; flower arranging; clothing design and hair dressing. Physical education classes were held in the ample terrace, covered to protect young women from direct sunshine. Once course fees were introduced, they varied according to the selection of subjects.[27] As the list of classes above is similar to those offered at other women's vocational schools, I will only mention courses which were unusual or unique.

Located on Santa María la Redonda and Primera de Mina, the *Escuela de Arte Industrial Corregidora de Querétaro*, named after the heroine of Mexican independence, was a two storied building with 45 rooms and two patios. Founded in 1910, the Querétaro School prepared single young ladies and housewives 'para conquistar su independencia económica'.[28] Courses were modernized in 1921 to include new workshops for perfume making, porcelain painting and photography. Students could earn extra money by doing work for individuals who contacted the school.[29] Anyone registered for the full-time course was required to take five hours per week of Spanish and arithmetic. Admission requirements included proof of completion of upper and lower primary school-six years in total. Thus, the students attending the Querétaro School had more basic education than their counterparts at the EAOS. In 1922, the school had an attendance of 1,603 day students and 827 night students, with 79 teachers for the day school and 17 for the night school.[30]

The *Escuela de Enseñanza Doméstica*, founded in 1915, trained women to be housewives or domestic economy instructors whose teaching would

25. AHSEP 2 (1923), p. 236

26. Secretaría de Educación Pública. (1928) *El esfuerzo educativo en México*. Tomo I. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública. pp. 479-80

27. AHSEP DETIC 74/3/13 pamphlet EAOS, w.d. w.m. 1926

28. AHSEP DETIC 74/3/24 pamphlet 'Corregidora de Querétaro' w.d. Jan 1927

29. FELL, C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos: los años del águila*. México: UNAM. Pp. 96-97

30. AHSEP DETIC 72/51/48 report from Director DETIC, 17 June 1922

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'transformar los hogares'.[31] Located on the Calle de Aztecas #1, the school served the north and east areas of the city.[32] The night school at *Enseñanza Doméstica* offered courses of shorter duration aimed specifically at servants.[33] In addition to courses similar to those taught at the CAOS, the *Escuela de Enseñanza Doméstica* provided classes in mothering. With no appropriate texts available, the teacher designed the course herself basing it on her own observations.[34] Topics included studying the baby and mother, dividing their experience into phases of development, explaining circulation and respiration, as well as reasons for crying and problems associated with breast feeding. Field trips away from school took students in the mothering classes to the public orphanage, *Casa de Cuna*, to practice 'el manejo de los niños, baño del niño y juego con los niños'.[35] Another possible major at *Enseñanza Doméstica* was 'housewifery'. Courses offered tips to future housewives on how to make an attractive home, which would 'retenga agradablemente a sus miembros,' on a small budget.[36] Students at *Enseñanza Doméstica* trained to be educated consumers, visiting orchards and fruit processing centres to learn how to select the best produce.[37]

Named for the celebrated Chilean poet, the *Escuela Hogar para Señoritas Gabriela Mistral*, founded in 1922, offered women an education which would not lead them into 'fracaso o a la disilusión'.[38] The school duplicated the mission of the *Escuela Nacional de Enseñanza Doméstica*, since one institution was not sufficient to meet the demands of parents.[39] The Mistral School was located on Sadi Carnot #63, where it served the working class areas of Guerrero, San Rafael, Santa María de la Ribera; the middle class neighbourhoods of Juárez and Roma and the towns of Popotla, Tacuba and Atzcapotzalco.[40] By 1923 it had moved to Peravillo 124.[41] Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), although an independent woman herself, promoted domestic lives for other women with the fervor of a missionary.[42] At the Mistral school, students learned to be content with their lot and to run their homes rationally. They were also instilled with a sense of camaraderie for fellow students.[43] They learned that professional careers were not the only means for fulfilment; they could find fulfillment in other kinds of labour particularly in work they could pursue from their homes.[44] The *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, in 1924 commented that the girls were of 'the better classes' and 'not so long ago the parents of these girls would have thought it a disgrace to have their children do any manual work'. However, according to the SEP, in 1925 the majority of students came from the 'clase social más desvalida'.[45] Further evidence is necessary in order to reconcile these views.

31. AHSEP-DETC 68/70/15 Directora's 'Informe de la Exposición de los trabajos hechos durante el año escolar de 1923 en la Escuela N. de Enseñanza Doméstica,' 29 Nov 1923
32. BSEP 1 (Mar 1922), p. 244
33. BSEP 1 (Sept 1922), p. 94
34. AHSEP-DETC 72/7/36 Directora to Director DETC, 25 Aug 1922
35. BSEP 5 (Feb 1926), p. 125
36. AHSEP-DETC 68/70/17 Directora's 'Informe de la Exposición de Enseñanza Doméstica,' 29 Nov 1923
37. BSEP 5 (Feb 1926), p. 126
38. AHSEP-DETC 74/18/2 'Finalidades de la Escuela' Directora Chirón y Gomez, 21 Nov 1928
39. BSEP 1 (Mar 1922), p. 240
40. BSEP 1 (Mar 1922), p. 244
41. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1923) *Noticia Estadística* 1925 México: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, p. 114
42. Vaughan, M.K. (1982) *The State, Education, and Social Class* DeKalb Northern Illinois University Press, 207-08
43. AHSEP-DETC 72/4/1 schoolrules, Directora Pacheco, 22 July 1922
44. AHSEP-DETC 74/18/2 'Finalidades de la Escuela' Directora Chirón y Gomez, 21 Nov 1928
45. BSEP 4 (Dec 1925) 206 and BSEP 58 (June 1924) 581

The *Escuela Hogar Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, founded in 1923 and named for Mexico's most famous woman poet, also offered a major in 'housewifery.' The De la Cruz School was located on Sadi Carnot 63 (in the same building where the Mistral School had been) and probably served a similar student body to the Mistral School. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695) was a poet who, 'in her plea for a single sexual standard and equal educational opportunity for men and women, prefigured the modern feminist movement in Mexico'.[46] The school which took her name trained women for service in the home and taught women to fulfill themselves through marriage and motherhood-neither of which were experienced by the nun Sor Juana. As part of the training for the degree in housewifery, students learned about the 'influencia de la mujer en el hogar;' 'selección de cuadros y adornos', 'presupuestos diarios', 'importancia de las plantas en el comedor', 'lavado y planchado de camisas de hombre' and 'reglas generales para conducirse en la familia y fuera de ella'.[47] We notice that subjects ranged from practical questions of ironing to decorum and decoration. A continuous kindergarten allowed the young women to practice their mothering skills on someone else's children.[48] The school closed briefly during 1927, both for economic reasons and because it was not filling 'la misión a que se había destinado.' But, in 1928, it was re-opened and enrolled a large group of single and married women who showed particular interest in domestic science courses.[49]

Examining the women's vocational schools, we come to the conclusion that women were taught to find fulfillment in household activity and as mothers. While vocational schools offered skill training, the skills were intended for domestic use. Enrollment continued to rise in women's vocational schools until 1927-1928, when enrollment dropped because of fewer teachers and a smaller budget.[50] This rise in enrollment suggests that women found the vocational courses useful. In 1924 and 1925, there were about twice as many women as men enrolled in either technical or commercial training.[51] Why did the SEP appear to give priority to women's technical education over men's? Soto explains that the SEP emphasized women's education over men's because men 'were more likely to learn trades outside of school'.[52] However the number of places in the technical schools available to men was insufficient. Perhaps the SEP initially invested in women's education because of the role women played moralizing the family. Additionally, the SEP may have been responding to women's demands for more educational opportunities. By 1928, there were almost twice as many vocational schools for women as for men in the Federal District.[53]

Conditions in Women's Vocational Education

Now that we have examined the programmes, let us turn to the situation inside classrooms. At the vocational level of education, some classrooms were overcrowded and under-supplied. For example, the 30

46. Macias, A. (1982) *Against all Odds*. Westport and London: Greenwood Press. 4.

47. AHSEP-DERC 74/15/19-20 pamphlet 'Escuela Hogar "Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,"' n.d. w.m. 1926.

48. AHSEP-DERC 74/15/6 pamphlet 'Sor Juana,' 1926.

49. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928) *El esfuerzo educativo en México Tomo I*. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública. P. 485.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 479.

51. *SEP* 5 (Feb. 1926), p. 109.

52. Soto, S. A. (1990) *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*. Denver: Arden Press. 100.

53. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928) *El esfuerzo educativo en México Tomo I*. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública. P. 473.

students in the Mistral School's class of clothing manufacture lacked sufficient tables and chairs to work simultaneously.[54] In a 1922 report on the cooking class, the *inspectora* noted close to 260 students in a space only equipped to accommodate 30. Even if the class had been small enough, the students still would not have been able to cook anything, as the stove was broken.[55] In a similar situation, the *bordado en máquina* class had only 30 sewing machines for 53 students.[56] The hat making class at the EAOS lacked a bookshelf, mirror and three irons and, finally, the sink was broken.[57] The EAOS also had problems with insufficient lighting for the clothing making class, which the *directora* was not taking pains to remedy.[58] The *directora* defended her school, saying that while most of the *inspectora*'s criticisms were accurate, they ignored the fact that everyone was making do admirably. She ended her letter saying, 'la señora Macías Gutiérrez ve con ojos negros' the school's administration and that 'está equivocada al decir que "durante sus visitas ha observado", pues es la primera vez que visita estas clases' While the relationship among SEP employees falls beyond the range of this paper, suffice to say that the above quotation is typical rather than exceptional.

Inside classrooms, teachers struggled with large numbers of students who had widely divergent levels of knowledge. Enrollment requirements notwithstanding, for some adults vocational education was their only experience of schooling. The problem was more pronounced in the night schools, which had lower admission requirements than day schools.

The *Excelsior*'s report on the exhibition which *Enseñanza Doméstica* staged vividly exemplifies the division between day and night schools:

> *La exposición de sombreros clase nocturna [ ] fue interesantísima además de por la variedad en la producción en estilos económicos por la circunstancia de que todo aquellos es obra de gente humilde mujeres trabajadoras que durante el día se ganan el pan en trabajos arduos y por la noche van perseverantemente a recibir sus clases, a aprender aquellas industrias femeninas que lenta pero seguramente acaban por redimirlas*
> *La exposición de clase diurna, también de sombreros [ ] ofrecieron labor de más refinamiento y de más costo [ ].*[59]

Different staff further accentuated stratification between day and night schools Day schools appeared to hire teachers with more experience and training, while night schools employed a lower caliber of teacher. It is also possible that night school teachers worked a full day before classes. Although the SEP consistently discouraged working multiple jobs, for poorly paid teachers it was often economic necessity.[60]

Many night school students too, arrived after a full day's work. For the students at the *Escuelas Nocturnas para Obreras*, night schools which I will discuss below, the afternoon and evening were not marked by rest or sustenance After an insufficient meal at mid day they worked through the afternoon In the evening, they arrived at school hungry and listless. *Inspectora* María Baños Contreras requested that the federal breakfast programme serve free snacks, so that students could have sustenance before starting their evening classes The Breakfast Service approved her

54. AHSEP DEIC 68/20/2 Inspectora to Director DEIC, 24 Mar 1922
55. AHSEP DEIC 68/20/5 Inspectora to Director DEIC, 24 Mar 1922
56. AHSEP DEIC 68/21/7 Inspectora to Director DEIC, 16 Mar 1923
57. AHSEP DEIC 68/17/5 Inspectora to Director DEIC, 14 Mar 1923
58. AHSEP DEIC 68/13/3 Inspectora to Director DEIC, 27 July 1922
59. *Excelsior* 2 (1924), p. 301
60. AHSEP Departamento Escolar (hereafter cited as DE) 56/2/2 Director de Querétaro to Director DEIC, reprinted in Mancera to Jefe DE, 17 Mar 1924

idea, and students presumably benefited from increased caloric intake.[61] Inspector Abraham Arellanos noted at the *Centro Industrial #2*, for working women, that students of the 'clase humilde' were 'casi adormecido[s]'.[62] Although he made no attempt to explain the students' listlessness, malnutrition could account for the symptoms. The attentiveness of one inspector likely improved the health and learning capacity of students, while the lack of perception of another may have aggravated what appears to have been malnutrition. In summary, it appears that in SEP night schools teachers, many of whom worked two jobs to survive, and students both struggled with exhaustion, which limited the quality of education.

Considering the differences between day and night schools, there might have been a *defacto* stratification of education in which the curriculum was altered to fit the perceived needs of different social classes. If, indeed, courses were tailored for the students' social class, then vocational education would have further reinforced existing differences rather than offering social mobility to students. Furthermore, students appeared to pay for their class materials. Students with fewer pecuniary resources would probably have worked with inferior supplies, while the better-off students would have been able to produce superior goods.

Case Study: Margaret Sanger's Pamphlet

We have examined the circumstantial problems which thwarted SEP educational efforts. Additionally, teachers and students deliberately ignored SEP curricula or advice. Now we will investigate instances of teachers re-making SEP programmes for their own ends. The first case concerns morality breeches in civics class, while the second case treats cooking and dress-making classes. We must remember that the society which contained and created these vocational schools was in the midst of flux. By the early 1930s, education would be called 'socialist' and be a fundamental means of spreading the Revolution, particularly its anti-clerical elements,[63] but in the 1920s the SEP was closer to its Porfirian heritage. Until the mid 1920s, educators preferred single-sex education and into the 1930s many human biological functions, such as reproduction, were not considered appropriate for classroom discussion. Teachers needed to take care in their words and not invite revolutionary challenges to morals and mores into the discussion. Those teachers who expanded the curriculum to include dangerous themes faced censure from the SEP, from parents and public opinion, as the case study below demonstrates.

In 1922, the Mexico City press published rumours that the SEP was using Margaret Sanger's pamphlets in the public schools. Sanger (1879-1966) was an early contraceptive advocate from the United States. Although I have found one reference to a clinic of hers in Mexico City in 1925,[64] I have not found supporting evidence in Sanger biographies.[65] If such a clinic existed, it was probably established by her followers, like in the Yucatán.

61. AHSEP-DERC 68/31/3 Jefe DE to Directora Desayunos Escolares, 11 July 1924 and Jefe DE to Director DERC, 22 July 1924.

62. AHSEP-DERC 68/35/21 Inspector to Director DERC, 23 Aug. 1924.

63. See Raby, D. L. (1989). "Ideología y construcción de Estado". *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 51: 317-18. Knight, A. (1994). "Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State". *Hispanic American Historical Review* 3 pp. 393-444.

64. Soto, S. A. (1979). *The Mexican Woman: A Study of her Participation in the Revolution*. Palo Alto: R & E Research Associates. p. 76.

65. Chesler, E. (1992). *Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Douglas, E. T. (1975). *Margaret Sanger: Pioneer of the Future*. Garrett Park, Maryland: Garrett Park Press. Sanger, M. (1938). *Margaret Sanger: an Autobiography*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Yucatán's Governor, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, authorized the publication and distribution of a Spanish translation of Sanger's pamphlet 'Birth control, or the compass of the home'. He invited Sanger herself to the Yucatán to found clinics and, although unable to attend, she sent Mrs. Anne Kennedy executive secretary of the National Council of the American Birth Control League, in her stead. As a result of Kennedy's visit, two clinics were founded in the Yucatán.[66]

Reports in Mexico City periodicals claimed that SEP teachers were distributing a Sanger pamphlet. One article claimed that the pamphlet was routinely used in SEP girls' primary schools. SEP Undersecretary Francisco Figueroa, speaking to the newspaper *La Raza*, said that if the pamphlet was being used and if it was immoral, then the SEP would prohibit its circulation among schoolgirls.[67] While charges that the pamphlet was distributed among primary school children appear to be the product of wild imaginations and tabloid style reporting, at least one women's vocational school probably used Sanger's work.

Through a newspaper article or perhaps parental complaints, the *Departamento de Enseñanza Técnica Industrial y Comercial* (DETIC) suspected that the Mistral School's civics classes utilized Sanger's pamphlet. On 8 August 1922, the DETIC ordered the *directora* of the Mistral School, Rosario Pacheco, to suspend civics classes and cease giving civics lectures at school assemblies.[68] The SEP appeared more interested in quelling damaging rumours than defending itself, its teachers or its schools from accusations of immoral instruction. Two days later, Pacheco gathered staff and students to explain the suspension. The report produced at this meeting relates that, after hearing the allegations against them, the teachers vehemently protested their innocence. Condemning Sanger's pamphlet, they claimed they had nothing to do with it. Afterwards, they re-affirmed their goal of creating moral and virtuous women who would sustain the domestic sphere.[69] Over 270 teachers and students signed the report.

In addition, the teachers protested the suspension of the morals and civics classes to the SEP. In a letter filled with innuendo, which makes no mention of Sanger's pamphlet, the teachers described their work. For them, the civics course provided a forum from which they struggled against their students' ignorance. This ignorance was the primary cause of 'errores y vicios de nuestro medio'. While it was not the teachers' role to expose young women to matters distant from their lives, the teachers felt it was their duty to answer students queries honestly.[70] The teachers' defense appears carefully worded to allude to the Sanger controversy, without providing evidence of misconduct. Because of their reluctance to provide specific examples of 'teaching from daily experience', I suspect that the teachers at the Mistral School were using Sanger's pamphlet. Among the signatories of this missive was Miss Dolores Castillo.

Although civics classes resumed a week after the suspension, the matter was far from conclusive.[71] While submitting to pressure from teachers and students, the DETIC was still concerned. To make fur-

66. Macías, A. (1982) *Against all Odds*. Westport and London: Greenwood Press. 92-93. JOSEPH, G. M. (1982) *Revolution from Without*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 216.

67. *La Raza* 30 July 1922.

68. AHSEP/DETIC 72/7/2 Mass sent to Director Mistral, 8 Aug. 1922.

69. AHSEP/DETIC 72/7/4 meeting report 10 Aug. 1922.

70. AHSEP/DETIC 72/7/17 teachers at Mistral School without addressee, 10 Aug. 1922.

71. AHSEP/DETIC 72/7/19 Massieu to Director Mistral, 14 Aug. 1922.

ther inquiries, the DFDC assigned inspector Juan León to the matter.[72] Since León devoted most of his attention to Castillo, it appears that he suspected her before beginning the investigation. However, León never states that Castillo is his primary target and his objective report fails to convey his own opinion on the investigation.

After observing her teach, León noted that Castillo

> *[...] dijo, entre otras cosas, que hasta ahora el hombre se ha impuesto la carga del Gobierno de la sociedad; pero que a la mujer le corresponde tomar participación en esa ardua labor para lo cual cuenta con infinidad de recursos en el hogar como esposa, hija, hermana o madre. Que a nadie se oculta el nuevo movimiento que la mujer está llevando a cabo para defender sus legítimos derechos, y que tiempo vendrán que igual al hombre, podrá ocupar los mismos cargos que aquél.*[73]

León found nothing scandalous in Castillo's summation of the situation of women in Mexico and the call for women's political action. Castillo tempered her analysis by using women's roles in the family and home as the rationale for their political role. While she envisioned full equality between men and women, that day had not yet come. When León returned to observe Castillo on a later date, she told her students why he was there 'agregando que en su clase siempre se habían tratado asuntos dentro de la moral más pura, y que nunca se había dicho nada de lo que aseguraban algunos diarios de la Capital.' Judging from Castillo's comments to her students, she was named in news articles as a corrupter of morals.

Classroom observations failed to produce traces of the notorious pamphlet, so *Directora* Pacheco arranged for León to interview Castillo's current and former students. Pacheco also recalled that some of Castillo's students had requested transfers to other civics classes because their teacher 'daba enseñanzas inmorales y que su confesor... les había prohibido que volvieran a la Escuela'. One student recalled that Castillo, after discussing women's emancipation, espoused that 'era preferible que la mujer se divorciara tres veces a que soportara las humillaciones del esposo'. One of the former civics students reported that Castillo taught inappropriate materials, including 'cosas íntimas que... les daba pena repetir'. Although embarrassed to mention the unmentionable to a SEP inspector, this student told her mother who forbid her to return to school. Gossip also circulated that Castillo had endorsed married couples having only two children and, according to rumours, Castillo promised to tell her students how to avoid pregnancy.[74] But the rumours had no one to substantiate them; for all León's investigations, he was not able to find one witness to charge Castillo with using Sanger's pamphlet.

Castillo's fate as a teacher in a federal school remains murky. However, no records indicate that Castillo was fired. In this circumstance, the DFDC attempted to placate everyone, from the voracious local press to anguished teachers and outraged parents. If Castillo was forced to resign, she could have served as a warning to the other civics teachers, who may have been using similar materials. Because the Mistral School was founded less than a year before the situation arose, it may have been freer from constraints created by longevity of staff and school history.

After receiving León's report on the Mistral School, the SEP made inquiries at other women's

72. AHSEP DFDC 72/7/21 secretary of Director DFDC to León, 19 Aug. 1922.
73. AHSEP DFDC 68/11/1 León to Director DFDC, 22 Aug. 1922.
74. AHSEP DFDC 68/11/1-4 León to Director DFDC, 22 Aug. 1922.

vocational schools concerning the Sanger pamphlet. The other schools all denied any improprieties.[75] However, the press continued to allege inappropriate materials in the classrooms and this tempest lasted for several more months. Throughout September and into October 1922 the local press published related stories. The controversy grew to such an extreme that the SEP finally held a press conference at the Mistral School, hoping that the students could dampen journalistic enthusiasm themselves. Luis Massieu, director of the *Departamento de Enseñanza Técnica, Industrial y Comercial*, spoke about the shameful articles which had recently appeared and his faith in the students present.[76] The press conference may have succeeded, for the investigations and circulars making the rounds at a furious rate ceased.

In this instance, the SEP was still closely rooted in its conservative Porfirian origins and some distance away from the 1930s curricula which included sex education.[77] We also encounter a conflict between an institution and the individuals who composed it. While Vaughan concentrates on the conservative elements within the body of SEP teachers, those educated in Porfirian normal schools,[78] a new generation of teachers, formed by the Revolution, took their experiences and beliefs into the classrooms. Perhaps Castillo was among them. As noted above, Macías finds that the majority of feminists in the 1920s were in fact primary school teachers.[79] It seems likely that some vocational teachers would also have been feminist. For example, Luz Vera, who became the *directora* of the Mistral School after Pacheco, was a prominent feminist[80] and Elena Torres, who directed the SEP's free breakfast programme, personally supported birth control so that, among other reasons, 'matrimonios pobres' could have the number of children they could educate.[81]

While this case may appear to be an isolated incident, teachers of both primary and vocational education committed acts which the SEP interpreted as breeches of morality. Circulars cautioned teachers not to teach illicit dances or sing the national anthem with bawdy lyrics. Teachers were also instructed not to use pornographic materials as reading matter.[82]

Moreover, problems in the Mistral School's civics classes occurred within the context of a public discourse which increasingly treated health concerns. The situation was indeed dire following the Revolution because of war-related diseases, and in 1919, school children were plagued by syphilis.[83] Malnutrition so devastated the school age population, prompting the educational authorities to create a free breakfast programme for students.[84] During Calles' presidency, vaccinations, medical clin-

75. AHSEP DETIC 72/7/26 31 Jefe DE to D rector DETIC and Director DETIC to directors women's technical schools. 24 and 25 Aug 1922.

76. AHSEP DETIC 72/7/49 50 Jefe DE without addressee, 6 Oct 1922.

77. Monroy Huitrón, G. (1985) *Política educativa de la Revolución (1910-1940)*. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública. Pp. 38-39.

78. Vaughan, M.K. (1982) *The State, Education and Social Class*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press. P. 204.

79. Macías, A. (1982) *Against all Odds*. Westport: Greenwood Press. Pp. 104-05.

80. *Ibid*., p. 106. Soto, S.A. (1990) *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*. Denver: Arden Press. P. 105. Galván, L.E. (1985) *La educación superior de la mujer*. México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Cuadernos de la Casa Chata 109. P. 32.

81. Universidad Iberoamericana. Archivo Elena Torres. folder 51, letter by Torres Mar. 1925.

82. AHSEP DE 39/17/53 and 61. Morales to teachers, inspectors etc. 18 Feb. 1921 and 14 Mar. 1921.

83. Gruening, E. (1928) *Mexico and its Heritage*. New York: The Century Co. P. 543, taken from Bulnes, F. (1920) *El verdadero Díaz y la revolución*. México: n.p. pp. 422-23.

84. BSAL 56 (Dec. 1922), pp. 565-66.

ics for children and expectant mothers, radio broadcasts of health care information and rural mobile health workers were all part of the national health campaign.[85] In Mérida, the birth control clinics founded under Carrillo Puerto, mentioned above, in partnership with the American Birth Control League, appear to have given prostitutes contraceptive information. According to Macías, Carrillo Puerto hoped the clinics would reduce high rates of venereal disease. However, as Macías points out, Sangers birth control methods were not possible for poor women, who, for example, could not afford the required douches and syringes.[86] As Stepan mentions, by the 1920s, eugenics had been incorporated into Mexican medico-social debates. The *Sociedad Mexicana de Puericultura* had a eugenics section, which, by 1929, included discussion of birth control and sex education.[87] Thus, Castillo's actions were not isolated from the rest of society, but rather took place on the fringe of the public discourse regarding sexual health and hygiene and, in some cases prefigured future debates.

Cooking up Scandal

While the Sanger case examines a teacher who was more revolutionary than the SEP, in other cases the SEP encouraged teachers to leave behind their old methods and curriculum. This next case study arises because the SEP tried to force the cultural nationalism of the Revolution on unwilling teachers. The controversy surrounding women's cooking courses shows how reforms from above were resisted by well-entrenched teachers and became part of a debate about the place of nationalism and culture in vocational education.

José Vasconcelos, Minister of Public Education under Obregón, began criticism of the cooking curricula. In April 1923 he depreciated the curricula because it was dominated by European foods and designed to teach 'lo que pomposamente se llama alta cocina'.[88] Instead, he called for simple Mexican foods suitable for daily meals. Teachers resisted attempts by Vasconcelos and the SEP to invade their kitchens and jettison complicated foods. Instead, they justified their curricula, saying that students would later seek employment in exclusive Mexican kitchens and needed the skills to make European high cuisine. While their argument may have contained some truth, teachers probably preferred preparing foreign dishes, which showed off their skill level.

Vasconcelos quibbled with the teachers' justification for their curricula, expressing doubts that cooking students would ever attain the skill level necessary to satisfy discerning taste or find employment within renowned kitchens. He condemned the teachers' European orientation, calling it 'el hábito de imitar a las clases ricas de una manera servil'. According to Vasconcelos, vocational schools needed to cater to the needs of the general population, teaching students how to make nutritious, low-cost meals for a family. He also complained that students could not even cook in large quantities, so that the SEP had to hire outside caterers for its events instead of hiring the student cooks. The pandemic invasion of U.S. dessert styles further aggravated Vasconcelos; he was determined to detain the en-

85. Soto, S.A. (1990). *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*. Denver: Arden Press. P. 101.

86. Macías, A. (1982). *Against all Odds*. Westport and London: Greenwood Press. P. 93.

87. Stepan, N.L. (1991). *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. P. 56.

88. AHSEP/CCC 62/1 &/1 Vasconcelos to directors, teachers and students of women's technical schools, 8 Apr. 1923.

croaching armies of 'cakes' with an army of his own. For this end, he appointed two inspectors to revive the dying art of Mexican desserts. Vasconcelos wanted cuisine taught in the vocational schools to be a bastion of nationalism and a source of Mexican pride.

Vasconcelos' opinions were unpopular with inspectors and teachers of cooking alike. A few months after his decree, the *Inspectora de Cocina y Repostería* requested permission to teach more elaborate dishes. She worried that exhibitions of the students' cooking would disappoint the crowds waiting to be delighted and astonished by extraordinary dishes. Exposition audiences would not queue up for food which they could cook themselves, she argued. She downplayed her own preferences, portraying herself as the mouthpiece of public, teacher and student demands.[89] Luis Massieu, director of the DETC, refused her petition and referred her to Vasconcelos' April circular.[90] While circulars shuttled around administrative offices, cooking classes continued on a steady diet of European food. For the month of May 1923, for example, a second year class heard about the 'historia de helados.' That spring, the women learned to make sherbert, ice cream, canapés and a ham mousse.[91] However, the teachers may have eventually compromised, for the public exhibition of students' work in the spring of 1924 included 'culinary exhibits [which] stressed Mexican and other dishes'.[92]

The questions over cooking curricula were only some of the ingredients in the debate. The larger and potentially divisive issue was which models, ideals or norms to teach students. In technical education, there was no consistent SEP policy guiding models: should they come from Mexico or beyond the borders? While affecting a nationalistic stance about cooking and drawing courses,[93] Vasconcelos still offered the masses Cervantes and translations of Goethe.[94] The SEP under Vasconcelos staged student performances modeled on classical Greek theatre. These open air events were intended to awaken sublime sentiments in the people and validate Mexican popular music.[95] Nonetheless, during one section of the performance, students were adorned in ivy garlands and clad in togas while in the next section students performed a typical Mayan dance.[96]

Even though Vasconcelos' SEP claimed to give preference to national themes in art and music, resolving the question of models in vocational education depended on who was asking and when.[97] In a larger context, the use of Mexican models was part of the cultural nationalism which emerged from the Revolution. José Vasconcelos, promoter of Mexican cultural nationalism in popular art and cooking curricula, was a europhile in literature and fashion. I will discuss next how his contempt for aping the elite did not extend to women's apparel. One is left wondering if his inconsistently applied

89. AHSEP DETC 68/18/9-10 Inspectora to Director DETC, 22 Sept 1923

90. AHSEP DETC 68/18/11 Jefe DETC to Director DETC, 10 Oct 1923

91. AHSEP DETC 68/19/20 Segundo Trimestre Temas Teóricos y Prácticos para las Clases de Cocina y Repostería 2o año de noche, n.d. May 1923

92. BEAU 58 (June 1924) p. 578

93. Fell C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila* México UNAM Pp. 434-45

94. Bravo Ugarte, J. (1965) *La Educación en México* México Editorial Jus P. 157

95. Fell C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila* México UNAM P. 416

96. BSEP I (Sept 1922) 208 and 214. See also Meneses Morales, E. (1983) *Tendencias educativas oficiales en México 1911-1934* México Editorial Porrua P. 343

97. Fell C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila* México UNAM P. 417

nationalism was a reflection of personal taste rather than personal convictions. Perhaps Vasconcelos enjoyed his *mole poblano* but preferred women in Parisian fashion instead of *rebozos* and braids.

Just as Vasconcelos appointed special inspectors for desserts, he also appointed inspectors for dressmaking courses. For cooking classes he had wanted the students to learn simple Mexican dishes, while in clothing manufacture he wanted students to mimic the styles of high fashion. Consultants to teachers and students both, fashion inspectors were on their guard against any signs of bad taste. They were chosen because their contact with high society had given them 'hábitos de refinamiento.' These style consultants would demonstrate to the students that 'bastan pobres elementos para lograr el buen parecer, con tal que se les arregle con modestia y verdad'.[98] Instead of looking for forms of dress which would appeal to vocational school students, fit into their budgets and reflect their own tastes, Vasconcelos tried to fashion the steps students into cheap copies of the elite. Thus, he promoted European styles and discouraged domestic forms of dress, while for the cooking curricula he endorsed the opposite.

Vasconcelos and his inspectors frowned on frippery and agreed that good taste was fundamental. The *Inspectora de Estilo* praised the hat-making teacher at the Querétaro School for her refined taste. Her hats '[...] parecen a la altura de cualquier casa de modas elegantes por el muy buen criterio que tiene en mezcar sus colores y telas'.[99] The report continued, criticizing another teacher because her hats lacked any vestiges of style whatsoever. In the clothing making class, the *inspectora* found Miss MacGregors students produced clothing without merit or taste and 'los trajes que salen de allí tienen un sello de haber sido hechos en casa'. The rest of her report was a censorious litany of which teachers had taste and which did not. She then mused that taste was difficult to improve:

> *[...] todas las jóvenes (como dice el licenciado Vasconcelos) quieren vestirse de una manera impropia de su condición, prefiriendo los colores vivos y las hechuras complicadas, aparentando un lujo que no pueden tener. creo que este defecto se corregiráa fuerza de constancia, presentandoles ejemplos que demuestran que el buen gusto es compatible con la sencillez y que deben fijarse en que sus vestidos sean elegantes, sobrios y hechos de telas que resistan el uso diario.*

While the students wanted to dress in lush colours and complicated designs, the *inspectora*'s disdainful and haughty remarks imply that students should dress within boundaries determined by their social station. Since the *inspectora* personally was blessed with good taste, she would counsel the students and teachers. She may have even believed that she was a missionary of sorts, preaching the gospel of elegance to the badly-dressed masses.

Night Schools for Working Women

The previous sections have concentrated on the situation of vocational classes in day schools. Now it is time to turn to the evening classes which were intended for women already in the labour force. Working women had multiple options for night school education. The vocational schools mentioned offered night classes; additionally, there were separate night schools aimed at women and girls older than 12 which taught primary education and craft

98. AHSEP-DENC 68/16/1&2 Vasconcelos to directors, teachers and students in vocational schools. 8 Apr. 1923.

99. AHSEP-DENC 68/16/1 0-11 Inspectora to Director DENC. 21 Apr. 1923.

skills.[100] Worker night schools for women numbered ten in 1923.[101] Conditions in these night schools were far worse than those in vocational schools, probably partially due to the fact that the schools did not charge fees. However, a more flexible curriculum allowed schools to respond quickly to the needs of students, who helped direct their own education. Moreover, students earned money on the products they made.[102]

Located mostly in the centre of the city and just north of the Zócalo, there were also worker night schools in the Colonias Guerrero, San Rafael, Mórelos and Juárez. Women's worker night schools were divided between the *Centros Industriales Nocturnos* (four) and the *Escuelas Nocturnas para Obreras* The Centros Nocturnos were opened in 1923 to give basic education and technical skills to women workers, allowing them to earn an independent living. Extremely successful, the centres, which were inadequately housed (one even lacked electricity), uncomfortable and under-supplied, soon had no space left for new students and had to turn hopefuls away. Although called 'industrial', courses were similar to those offered in women's vocational schools, teaching small scale crafts such as soap-making, umbrella making and bookbinding, as well as typing.[103] Unfortunately, I do not have attendance figures for the worker night schools. In 1923 *Centros Industriales* #1-4 had the capacity for 300, 600, 700 and 900 students, respectively.[104] Numbers enrolled were 530, 730, 766 and 750, respectively.[105] Thus, three of the centres were probably overcrowded.

Consuelo Rafols, *inspectora* of women's night schools, distinguished between the students at the *Centros Industriales* and the *Escuelas Nocturnas*. She described the students at the *Escuelas Nocturnas* as 'un elemento más humilde, tales como sirvientas y operarias, se lucha con la torpeza manual de gente que ha desempeñado trabajos rudos durante el dia y además sumamente pobre que sólo puede hacer gastos muy pequeños'.[106] According to inspector Arellanos, who noted again and again the students' enthusiasm for learning, the students at the *Centros Industriales* were servants and working class.[107] While obviously within the categories 'servant' or 'worker' there are many sub-divisions, the inspectors did not elaborate further. Since the two inspectors held different opinions, I will consider the students of both types of schools to be a mixture of women, including industrial workers, servants, seamstresses and perhaps some office workers.

In 1923, the curriculum at the *Escuelas Nocturnas para Obreras* expanded to include small scale industrial training. According to DEPC plans, the *directoras* of the night schools would design technical courses addressing students' needs and interests.[108] *Directoras* had license to use their own initiative to cater to their students. Nonetheless,

100. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928) *El esfuerzo educativo en México Tomo I* México: Secretaría de Educación Pública P 180

101. AHSEP DEPC 72/18/5 Lista de las escuelas nocturnas. 12 Apr. 1923

102. Meneses Morales, E (1983) *Tendencias educativas oficiales en México 1911-1934* México, Editorial Porrúa P 382

103. Fell, C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila* México: UNAM P 202 and footnote 305.

104. AHSEP DEPC 63/5/28 'Número de alumnos que según ...' Mencera, 26 Feb 1923

105. Fell, C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila*. México: UNAM P 202 footnote 305

106. AHSEP DEPC 68/32/19 Inspectora 1o Director DEPC, 22 Dec 1923

107. AHSEP DEPC 68/29/5 Inspector 1o Director DEPC, 26 July 1923

108. AHSEP DEPC 68/37/40 Informe Año de 1923 Escuelas Nocturnas para Obreras, w/d Dec 1923

since schools depended on the *directora* to design the curriculum, schools without energetic leadership could languish. Furthermore, technical instruction in the *Escuelas Nocturnas* depended on the facilities and teachers available. For example, sewing classes could not occur unless the school had the necessary equipment and a qualified teacher. Moreover, students had heterogeneous backgrounds and skill levels.[109] Thus, teachers had to devise one class for myriad levels of knowledge or plan several smaller classes.

Although Inspector Arellanos believed women's night schools generally to be more successful than men's, he criticized women's night schools on a variety of counts. Hygiene talks wasted time, since most students lived in situations of squalor which could only be improved by better economic circumstances. Moreover, the training women received did not provide them with the means to earn an independent living or be household-heads. Still, Arellanos believed that the crafts-making skills would help women improve their homes and families both 'morally' and 'economically'.[110] *Inspectora* Rafos offered more praise for women's night schools, saying they responded to 'la necesidad de dar a las obreras mejor medios de vida, abrirles un campo de acción más grande y darles iniciativa industrial y comercial sin perder femenidad, inspirándoles amor y cuidados por su hogar'.[111]

Conditions in women's night schools were greatly inferior to those in day vocational schools. The SEP had to use and re-use all the resources available to it, which meant that most buildings housed multiple activities. Altercations arose because day school directors felt possessive towards the building and resented the night tenants as interlopers. Fortunate night schools could utilize all the available space, but if the director of the day school had some sort of grudge against the SEP or territorial conflict with the night school, sections of the school would be kept locked and dark in the evenings. In an extreme case, night school students were not even permitted access to the toilets.[112]

Buildings which housed multiple night time activities had even more problems. One women's night school shared a building with an co-ed *orfeón popular*. The choral society used the facility's central rooms and the women's night school used the rooms around the periphery of the singing workers. Certain unmentioned impropriet es occurred because of the mixing of men and women in this situation and the inspector requested that the *orfeón* find another place to practice.[113] Conflicts with choral societes were frequent enough that when peace reigned between a night school and a choral society inspector Contreras noted it.[114] These conflicts were not based on gender; in men's night schools, as well, *orfeones populares* were magnets for trouble.[115]

The aforementioned choral society, for the 'clase humilde,' functioned under the SEP's *Departamento de Bellas Artes y Cultura Estética*. In theory, singing 'canciones populares' lifted these singers and their families to a superior cultural level and the workers learned to entertain family gatherings with 'typi-

109. AHSEP DEPC 68/30/12 Inspector to Director Departmento de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal (hereafter cited as DEPN) 9 Mar 1923.
110. AHSEP DEPC 68/29/5 Inspector to Director DEPC, 26 July 1923
111. AHSEP DEPC 68/32/4 Inspectora to Director DEPC, 14 May 1923.
112. AHSEP DEPC 68/30/18 Inspector to Director DEPN 9 Mar 1923
113. AHSEP DEPC 68/29/7 Inspector to Director DEPC, 26 Sept 1923
114. AHSEP DEPC 68/30/3 Inspector to Director DEPN 8 Feb 1923.
115. AHSEP DEPC 68/30/17 Inspector to Director DEPN 9 Mar 1923

cal' music.[116] *Orfeones* may have been intended to bring culture to the 'cultureless,' but instead became an excuse for socializing between men and women. Referring to these choral societies, our trusted inspector Arellanos commented that

> *[. . .] gozan los alumnos de una completa libertad, que lleva a un desorden completo, unos permanecen en saguán (sic) otros en las puertas y por último se pasan buen tiempo bailando y platicando en grupitos o por parejas, y de cuando en cuando organizan fiestecitas como tamaladas, así es que prefieren el desorden y las pláticas entre compañeros y compañeras, que asistir a las Escuelas de un solo sexo donde van a estudiar y a aprender algo útil.*[117]

From Arellanos' comments, it becomes clear that disturbances between the *orfeones populares* and night schools occurred in part because of lack of discipline and in part because of conflicting goals.

Night school students created their own disturbances, as well, and day school staff had reason to worry about what they would find in the morning. At the *Escuela Nocturna #67*, students arrived to find no authority figure present and some of the women vandalized the school.[118] At the *Escuela para Obreras #9* four students destroyed the day school's vegetable garden.[119] Although in both of the above cases students caused the damage, they had no financial responsibility for their actions. The night school staff was responsible for pecuniary damages inflicted by their students.[120]

Administrators faced another struggle enforcing regular attendance, which suffered because of a range of factors. Multiple educational offerings in the same neighborhoods competed with each other for students. For example, students from the *Escuela Nocturna para Obreras #12* preferred to attend classes at the Mistral School.[121] Additionally, outside events and entertainment lowered attendance. In one instance, inspector Arellanos blamed lowered attendance at a men's night school on the *Congreso Eucarístico*, a 'carpa de Variedades' and the local cinema.[122] Weather also deterred students; during the wet season strong rains and transportation difficulties reduced class size.[123] Dangerous streets threatened night school students. In the neighbourhood of the *Escuela Nocturna #26* 'el rumbo es malo y convendría poner un gendarme en la puerta para evitar el continuo asedio en que tiene a las alumnas la mala gente del barrio'.[124] Students, families and administration perceived that street dangers were greater for women than for men and, thus, rough neighbourhoods hurt women's night schools more than men's. Finally, the internal atmosphere of the school attracted or repelled students. At the *Centro Industrial Nocturna #4*, attendance diminished because an *orfeón popular* shared the hallways with the women's night school, and the women's families were concerned about immoral influences.[125]

While attendance figures moved up and down with the seasons, tardiness disrupted classes constantly. Students, teachers and even directors ar-

116. BSEP 2 (1923), 414-17.
117. AHSEP DEPIC 68/34/14 Inspector to Director DEPIC, 5 Sept. 1923.
118. AHSEP DEPIC 68/37/16 Director DEPN to Director DEPIC, 2 June 1923.
119. AHSEP DEPIC 68/31/1 Inspectora to Director DEPIC, 18 June 1924.
120. AHSEP DEPIC 68/31/2 Director DEPIC to Inspectora, 3 July 1924.
121. AHSEP DEPIC 68/37/41 Informe Año de 1923 Escuelas Nocturnas para Obreras, Dec. 1923.
122. AHSEP DEPIC 68/35/24 Inspector to Director DEPIC, 1 Nov. 1924.
123. AHSEP DEPIC 68/35/14 Inspector to Director DEPIC, 17 May 1923.
124. AHSEP DEPIC 68/32/3 Inspectora to Director DEPIC, 13 May 1923.
125. AHSEP DEPIC 72/41/1 Director to Jefe DE, 19 July 1925.

rived hours after classes should have begun. Once inside the crowded building, students would slowly meander to their classroom through the hubbub of fellow students. Dogs and cats roamed halls; students stopped to greet each other, mingling and exchanging laughs with friends as they went. It would appear that for many students education was the last reason they attended night school classes.

And what of the students?

Now we turn to just that question, why did students attend vocational schools? Who attended day and night school? What can we know of these women? SEP statistical surveys offer some clues. Generally, 14 years old was the minimum age for enrollment in technical education. In 1926, most women enrolled in vocational schools were between the ages of 14-20. A SEP survey from 1926 indicates that the bulk of women in vocational schools, both day and night schools, enroled for individual courses.[126] Furthermore, the high pass rate (91 percent in 1926) indicates that almost all women mastered their training.[127] Thus, most women pursuing vocational education were between 14 and 20, preferred classes in a particular skill, rather than a degree programme, and finished their classes at mastery level.

While early SEP reports note that women's vocational education was in high demand among the 'middle class' and the 'poor',[128] we must further distinguish between women enroled in day and night courses. Day school students probably came from families which were able and willing to support an unemployed adult member. These families valued education and were able to invest in their daughter's future. As I mentioned above, it was parents whose demand led to the founding of the Mistral School. Day vocational education, particularly for those women who enrolled in a degree course, could be construed as a finishing school experience; students refined their taste and learned to run a household. However, women in degree courses were a minority.

In contrast, night schools were specifically designed for working women. Night school students were women of 'modesta posición',[129] who worked in factories, offices, as servants and as homemakers. Many of these students worked a full day and then mustered their remaining energy for night learning. They sought 'increased knowledge, increased incomes, and increased pleasures'.[130] Their commitment to a double day indicates how much these women valued education and suggests that their training offered concrete possibilities for improving their situation. While night school students learned skills similar to their day school counterparts, their financial circumstances makes it more likely that they would have used their skills to earn an income.

Women who attended day school and women who attended night schools both used vocational training for their own ends. They did not feel an obligation to finish their courses, rather, they wanted immediate utility from their education. Selecting courses, students preferred those with practical

126. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928) *Noticia Estadística... 1926* México: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública. Pp. 288-89.

127. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-83.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

129. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928) *El esfuerzo educativo en México. Tomo I.* México: Secretaría de Educación Pública. 343.

130. *Mujer* 5:8 (June 1924) p. 582.

value. One inspector said that students gave preference 'a los cursos que les proporcionan enseñanzas de aplicación inmediata utilitaria como son el de corte y confección, la cocina, postizos y peinados y las flores artificiales' [131]

Moreover, as mentioned above, students in technical education attended courses to perfect a particular skill. Attaining their desired skill level, students left school; initially many students did not even sit for exams. The DEMC, in its report on student progress for 1923, minimized exams as a reliable indicator of student advancement.[132] The report noted that low exam attendance did not mean that schools were failing, rather low exam attendance proved that technical schools were functioning properly. Vocational schools provided accessible and rapid skill improvement. Once students had attained their skill goal, they stopped attending classes. Thus, students did not benefit from the more general education and some of the adults, who desired only skill training, did not even know how to read.[133]

Attendance figures further demonstrate that drop out rates varied by school, suggesting that attendance depended on the staff and courses. For example, the Querétaro School only lost 33 students out of 1,081 in 1924 and a remarkable four out of 1,122 in 1925.[134] Meanwhile, in 1924, the EAOS enrolled 1,095 students and 547 left early. In 1925, 760 students enrolled in the EAOS night school and 367 dropped-out.[135]

Statistics for 1926 suggest that the SEP had yet to solve its retention problem. Out of the thirteen primary night schools total, the drop-out rates ranged from 17.55 percent to 71.28 percent. The overall drop out rate was 42.42 percent. Of the 1,285 women who enrolled in primary night schools, 495 did not finish the year.[135]

Once students enrolled, they influenced their education and adapted it to their needs. A high drop-out rate in particular courses and schools indicated students' preferences to the administration. Moreover, all students had the weapons of tardiness and absenteeism in their arsenal. Students could attend or not attend courses, arrive on time or late. While inspector Contreras held dull classes and unenthusiastic teachers to blame for problems of attendance and lack of punctiliousness,[137] students may have deliberately missed selected courses. In worker night schools, academic classes were usually first, followed by technical courses. Tardy students would miss part or all of the academic portion of their education, while arriving on time for skills training. Tardy students may have attended night school only for the technical training, but not the academic courses.

Students influenced which courses schools offered through official and *de facto* means; student enthusiasm or lack of interest helped shape the curricula. For example, students could tell their teachers or director which classes they wanted. A group of young women at the EAOS dropped their cooking class upon learning that chemistry was a requirement.[138] By telling the director what they valued, students helped ensure that appropriate

131. AHSEP DEMC 68/15/1 Inspector to Director DEMC, 7 Mar. 1923

132. *Ibid* 2 (1924), pp. 111-12

133. Fell, C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos: los años del águila* México UNAM P. 203

134. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1927) *Noticia Estadística ... 1925* México Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública Table I

135. *Ibid* Table I3

136. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928) *Noticia Estadística 1926* México Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública Pp. 101-04

137. AHSEP DEMC 68/30/22 Inspector to Director DEMC, 9 Mar. 1923

138. AHSEP DEMC 68/18/7 Inspector to Director DEMC, 13 May 1923

courses would be available. But, as mentioned above, even if students never verbalized a preference, enrollment figures showed which courses students found most useful.

Thus far we know that students were mostly between 14 and 20 years old, although smaller numbers of women over 20 enrolled in vocational education.[139] Some students worked for a living, for example as office workers or domestic servants, while others were supported by their families. In general, students preferred individual courses which offered immediate utility and students did not feel obligated to finish their courses or take exams.

Once the students left vocational education, to what use did they put their training? It is difficult to know if vocational training improved job prospects or the economic situation of former students. As I mentioned before, at *Enseñanza Doméstica*, students who majored in home economics with hopes of teaching in primary schools soon discovered that there was no demand for their skills and the SEP made no effort to help them.[140] However, the high overall demand for night school training and the rise in enrollment in the day institutions indicate that the courses offered met students' needs and goals.[141] At the time of the SEP's founding, the attendance at women's technical schools was already "numerosa y asidua".[142] In 1923, one SEP official attributed the popularity of the *Centros Nocturnos* to women's new ideas of emancipation and desire for advancement. Without some sort of training they would not be able to act on their goals.[143] The *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* credits the *Centros Nocturnos* with giving servants skills which earned them luxury money, allowing them to attend the cinema for the first time. Other women changed their occupation to utilize their new skills like bookbinding. Single mothers used their skills to earn money to support their children.[144] Of one thing we can be sure; women utilized their vocational training for their own goals. The students in the vocational schools, both day and night courses, were rational thinking women who selectively chose what they wanted to sample from the SEP's offerings.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, in the 1920s, women in Mexico City had increasing employment opportunities in areas such as teaching, nursing and office work. Nonetheless, while these opportunities existed, the most readily available type of education for adult women trained them for a traditional female role. Vocational education continued to offer women preparation for motherhood, the domestic sphere and small-scale crafts making. Rather than treating women as revolutionary equals or preparing women for their expanding role in society, the SEP continued to promote women's place as the home. Thus, the women of the Revolution were educated as their Porfirian predecessors had been, with courses in artisan work and housekeeping. As Inspector Arellanos noted, above, women's night school courses did not provide them with a means to earn an independent living nor were they prepared to

139. Secretaría de Educación Pública. (1928) *Noticia Estadística*. . 1926 México: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública. PP 288-89.

140. BSEP 2 (1923) 236-37.

141. Secretaría de Educación Pública (1928). *El esfuerzo educativo en México Tomo I*. México Secretaría de Educación Pública. 480 and 473. See 504-05 annex 3 for complete enrollment statistics

142. Fell, C. (1989) *José Vasconcelos los años del águila* México: UNAM P. 196

143. *Ibid*, p. 203.

144. BPAU 58 (June 1924) p. 582

be household heads. Rather, courses trained women to provide a domestic haven for husband and children without challenging the role of the male as the primary wage earner.

Educating women of the Revolution, the SEP focused on their roles as mother and homemaker. But the students themselves took the vocational opportunities available to them, attended the courses they had chosen and dropped out when the education was no longer useful. Students also altered educational offerings; they preferred their own styles while suffering the scrutiny of inspectors sent to enforce SEP models and norms. Moreover, teachers, like Dolores Castillo, changed SEP programmes. Although the SEP concentrated on educating mothers and homemakers, the women who took these classes thought about what they wanted from their education and then achieved the goals they had set for themselves. Regardless of the ideologies the SEP promoted, the steady increases in enrollment suggest that women found the vocational skills they learned useful for their lives.

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